

MAY, 1889.

The monthly evening meeting was held on May 14th. The President, His Excellency Sir Robert G. C. Hamilton, K.C.B., presided.

Mr. R. Price-Williams was introduced as a visitor.

OSCILLATION OF LAND AND SEA LEVELS.

Captain SHORTT, R.N., read "a paper on "The possible oscillation of levels of land and sea in Tasmania during recent years." He referred to the earth tremors experienced during the years of 1883-86, prior to the Tarawera eruption, in this and adjacent colonies, and these phenomena being known to often be associated with local changes of sea and land, he was led to form the opinion that it was of great importance that it should be ascertained whether recent changes could be traced along the coast line of this island. Great difficulty naturally arose owing to the fact that with but one isolated exception no definitely fixed marks were in existence. This exception was a tide mark taking the form of a broad arrow on the Isle of the Dead, situate off Point Puer, Port Arthur. This mark was cut in the rock by Mr. Lempriere. He had made efforts to discover further records relating to Mr. Lempriere's observations, having applied to Mr. Wharton, Hydrographer of the Admiralty, but without success. By observations made in February of last year, it was apparent that there had been no practical alteration of the levels of sea and land during the past 47 years. This, however, only bore reference of a reliable character in so far as the southern portion of the island is concerned. Regarding the northern portion no reliable data existed, but it was interesting to note that Captain Miles had learned from the half-castes of the Furneaux Group that they had noticed an apparent decrease of depth of water over certain well-known rocks during recent years. He had taken steps to fix a tide mark on Flinders Island, permitting of observations being made in future, and urged the necessity of making such marks on various parts of the coast line of the colony.

CONGRATULATORY.

Mr. BARNARD desired, on behalf of the Royal Society, of which he was one of the oldest vice-presidents, to thank His Excellency for the part taken by him in that afternoon's proceedings relative to the new wing now added to the Museum building. He referred to the small beginnings in the matter of a museum first taken up by the Tasmanian Scientific Institution, of which Institution only two members—Dr. Agnew and himself—now remained alive. They then had an exhibition of specimens in a room in Macquarie-street without any attempt at classification. He congratulated the Royal Society on the progress made, and also the Museum Trustees on the fine addition to their building, for despite the fact that there were some persons who regarded the Museum and Royal Society as separate institutions, he could not in his mind separate them, for they had one object, the advancement and increase of knowledge. He also referred in congratulatory terms respecting the movement in the direction of an art gallery.

PAPERS.

THE ENGLISH AT THE DERWENT AND THE RISDON SETTLEMENT.

Mr. J. B. WALKER read a paper on this subject. He referred to a paper read by him last November on French visits to this colony and

their supposed design of colonising it, and stated that the present paper would follow the course of English discoveries in Southern Tasmania. The English discoverer of the Derwent was Lieut. John Hayes, of the Hon. East India Co.'s Service. In those days the East India Co. claimed a monopoly of the trade, not only with India and China, but with the whole of the Pacific and New Holland. So late as 1806 the company successfully resisted the landing and sale in England of a cargo of oil and seal skins shipped by a Sydney firm, the ground being that it was infringement of their monopoly. Hayes' expedition was the only one ever sent by the company to assist in Australian discovery. Hayes was ignorant of D'Entrecasteaux's surveys, and when he came up the river in 1794 he thought it was an original discovery, and named it the Derwent. He also named Mount Direction, Prince of Wales Bay, Cornelian Bay, Risdon Cove, and other places. The vessel carrying Hayes' charts and papers to England was captured by the French and all his journals taken to Paris, and the result of his voyage was lost. The next visitors to the Derwent were Flinders and Bass, in the Norfolk. They circumnavigated Tasmania for the first time and surveyed the Derwent. Bass gave a favourable description of the country on the shores of that river, and was particularly struck with the advantages of Risdon. It was probably owing to his report that Governor King instructed Lt. Bowen to form his settlement there. The paper then proceeded to give the history of the Risdon settlement, principally from information contained in documents preserved in the English State Record Office, and which were lately copied by Mr. Jas. Bonwick for the Tasmanian Government. The first settlement in Tasmania was made on September 12, 1803, on the hill near Risdon, on which the house of the late Mr. T. G. Gregson stands, a most unsuitable site, as it afterwards proved. From the very commencement Bowen had great trouble with his people, the prisoners being of a very bad class, lazy, useless, and ill-behaved. The few soldiers who formed his guard were discontented and almost mutinous. A few weeks after Bowen's arrival a reinforcement of prisoners and soldiers was sent from Sydney, making the number up to about 100, but the new arrivals proved no better than the first. Very little in the way of progress was accomplished, and when Governor Collins arrived in February, 1804, he found no ground had been prepared for sowing. Prisoners escaped from the colony, and the soldiers robbed the stores. In February, 1804, Governor Collins abandoned the proposed settlement at Port Phillip, and brought his colony to the Derwent. He abandoned Risdon as unsuitable, and chose the present site of Hobart for his new town. Bowen was at the time absent in Sydney, whither he had taken a soldier to be tried for robbery. When he returned he found Collins in command at the new settlement in Sullivan's Cove. The little party at Risdon were in a sad condition, short of food, and altogether demoralised. Lt. Bowen was still left in charge of the Risdon colony, and on May 3, 1804, the first affray took place between the English and the aborigines at Risdon. The cause of this unfortunate occurrence was the arrival of 200 or 300 natives who had come to hunt kangaroo. They did not attack the settlers, but their appearance created a panic, which resulted in the soldiers firing upon the blacks, killing a number variously estimated at from three to 50. This was the beginning of the troubles with the natives which lasted for nearly 30 years, and ended in the almost complete destruction of the native race, and the removal of the remnant to Flinders Island. In May 1804 the Risdon settlement was abandoned, and all the soldiers and the prisoners comprising it, except about a dozen were sent back to Sydney in the month of August. Lieut. Bowen's pay for 14 months governorship was 100gns. He returned to England, and as captain of an English man-of-war, served during the later years of the French war, dying in 1828.

OPINIONS OF A VISITOR.

Mr. PRICE-WILLIAMS expressed the deep interest he had felt in the papers read that evening. He was of opinion that the suggestion respecting the recording of the earth's changes and the relative levels of the earth and sea should be given effect to in all parts. It was highly gratifying to find to what extent the scientific efforts were carried in this colony.

THE IRON BLOW AT THE LINDA GOLDFIELD

Mr. R. M. JOHNSTON read a paper on this subject, in which he set forth that the differences of opinion as between himself and Mr. Thureau, fortunately, were not of a serious nature, and, according to Mr. Thureau's recent explanation, he perceived they were more due to the confused way in which descriptive terms were employed than to any real differences of opinion. The question between them had been altogether misconceived by Mr. Thureau. If Mr. Thureau had discussed the Iron Blow question without confusing these two fundamental considerations it would have placed the issues between them in a very small compass. In the course of the paper he contended that the fissure at the Linda was originally caused by the same dynamic forces which caused the tilting, folding, and metamorphoses of the crystalline rocks, and that these mighty effects were primarily caused by the gravitation of the outer crust towards the shrinking and cooling central mass of the earth. Mr. Thureau's reply firmly established his opinion "That the four principal elements—iron, barytes, sulphur, and gold—were originally precipitated from solution." That both decomposition and recomposition in mineral veins are among the most common of all occurrences and cannot reasonably be disputed; and finally that true mud volcanoes differ widely in characteristics from the phenomena associated with the Linda Iron Blow, and neither in their mode of appearance, nor in their characteristic contents, show the slightest correspondence with the metalliferous fissure lodes of the Linda district. Further discussion was postponed till the June meeting.

COMPLIMENTARY.

Votes of thanks to the writers of papers, closed the proceedings.